

Remove Debris



Wildfire

The threat of wild fires is very real for people living in rural New Mexico. Advance planning and knowing how to protect buildings in these areas can lessen the devastation of a wild land fire. There are several safety precautions that you can take to reduce the risk of fire losses. Protecting your home from wildfire is your responsibility.

Prepare for a Wildfire

Find Out What Your Fire Risk Is

Learn about the history of wildfire in your area. Be aware of recent weather. A long period without rain increases the risk of wildfire. Consider having a professional inspect your property and offer recommendations for reducing the wildfire risk.

Determine your community's ability to respond to wildfire. Are roads leading to your property clearly marked? Are the roads wide enough to allow firefighting equipment to get through? Is your house number visible from the roadside?

Always be ready for an emergency evacuation. Learn and teach safe fire practices. Build fires away from nearby trees or bushes. Always have a way to extinguish the fire quickly and completely. Never leave a fire—even a cigarette—burning unattended. Avoid open burning completely, and especially during dry season.

What to do Before a Wildfire

Create a 30-foot safety zone around the house

Move shrubs and other landscaping away from the sides of the house.

Prune branches and shrubs within 15 feet of chimneys and stove pipes.

Remove tree limbs within 15 feet of the ground.

Thin a 15-foot space between tree crowns.

Replace highly flammable vegetation such as pine, juniper, and fir trees with lower growing, less flammable species. Check with your local fire department or garden store for suggestions.

Cut the lawn often keeping the grass at a maximum of 2 inches.

Watch grass and other vegetation near the driveway, a source of ignition from automobile exhaust systems.

Clear the area of leaves, brush, pine needles and cones, dead limbs and fallen trees.

TIPS

Get HELP!

Call 9-1-1. Don't assume that someone else has already called. Describe the location of the fire, speak slowly and clearly, and answer any questions asked by the dispatcher.

Create Safety Zones

Create a second zone at least 100 feet around the house

This zone should begin about 30 feet from the house and extend to at least 100 feet. In this zone, reduce or replace as much of the most flammable vegetation as possible.

Clear all combustibles within 30 feet of any structure.

Install electrical lines underground, if possible.

Ask the power company to clear branches from power lines.

Avoid using bark and wood chip mulch.

Stack firewood 100 feet away and uphill from any structure.

Store combustible or flammable materials in approved safety containers and keep them away from the house.

Keep the gas grill and propane tank at least 15 feet from any structure. Clear an area 15 feet around the grill. Place a 1/4 inch mesh screen over the grill. Always use the grill cautiously but refrain from using it all during high risk times.



Shut off GAS

Before the Fire Approaches Your House

Evacuate. Evacuate your pets and all family members who are not essential to preparing the home. Anyone with medical or physical limitations and the young and the elderly should be evacuated immediately.

Wear Protective Clothing.

Remove Combustibles. Clear items that will burn from around the house, including wood piles, lawn furniture, barbecue grills, tarp coverings, etc. Move them outside of your defensible space.

Close/Protect Openings. Close outside vents, windows, doors, pet doors, etc. Remove flammable drapes and curtains. Close all shutters, blinds or heavy non-combustible window coverings to reduce radiant heat.

Close Inside Doors/Open Damper. Close all doors inside the house to prevent draft. Open the damper on your fireplace, but close the fireplace screen.

Shut Off Gas. Shut off any natural gas, propane or fuel oil supplies at the source.

Water. Connect garden hoses. Fill any pools, hot tubs, garbage cans, tubs or other large containers with water.

Pumps. If you have gas-powered pumps for water, make sure they are fueled and ready.



TIPS

Home Protection Tips

Remove debris from under sun decks and porches.

Enclose eaves and overhangs.

Cover house vents with wire mesh.

Install spark arrestors in chimneys and stovepipes.

Use fire resistant siding.

Choose safety glass for windows and sliding glass doors.

Prepare for water storage; develop an external water supply such as a small pond, well, or pool.

Ladder. Place a ladder against the house in clear view.

Car. Back your car into the driveway and roll up the windows.

Garage Doors. Disconnect any automatic garage door openers so that doors can still be opened by hand if the power goes out. Close all garage doors.

Valuables. Place valuable papers, mementos and anything “you can’t live without” inside the car in the garage, ready for quick departure. Any pets still with you should also be put in the car.

Preparing to Leave

Lights. Turn on outside lights and leave a light on in every room to make the house more visible in heavy smoke.

Don’t Lock Up. Leave doors and windows closed but unlocked. It may be necessary for firefighters to gain quick entry into your home to fight fire. The entire area will be isolated and patrolled by sheriff’s deputies or police.

What to do During a Wildfire
Survival in a Vehicle

This is dangerous and should only be done in an emergency, but you can survive the firestorm if you stay in your car. It is much less dangerous than trying to run from a fire on foot.

Roll up windows and close air vents. Drive slowly with headlights on. Watch for other vehicles and pedestrians. Do not drive through heavy smoke.

If you have to stop, park away from the heaviest trees and brush. Turn headlights on and ignition off. Roll up windows and close air vents.

Get on the floor and cover up with a blanket or coat.

Stay in the vehicle until the main fire passes.

Stay in the car. Do not run! Engine may stall and not restart. Air currents may rock the car. Some smoke and sparks may enter the vehicle. Temperature inside will increase. Metal gas tanks and containers rarely explode.



**Stay
in car
do not
Run
Engine**

If Trapped at Home

Stay calm. As the fire front approaches, go inside the house. You can survive inside. The fire will pass before your house burns down.

If Caught in the Open

The best temporary shelter is in a sparse fuel area. On a steep mountainside, the back side is safer. Avoid canyons, natural “chimneys” and saddles.

If a road is nearby, lie face down along the road cut or in the ditch on the uphill side. Cover yourself with anything that will shield you from the fire's heat.

If hiking in the back country, seek a depression with sparse fuel. Clear fuel away from the area while the fire is approaching and then lie face down in the depression and cover yourself. Stay down until after the fire passes! ■

If You are Trapped

